

## OPTIMISTIC VIEW OF LIFE IN ELEANOR H. PORTER'S POLLYANNA (1913)

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### **Abstract**

*The major problem of this study is the optimistic view of life reflected in Eleanor Porter's Pollyanna (1913). The aims of this study are to describe Pollyanna portrayal in Eleanor H. Porter's Pollyanna novel, to explain Pollyanna's self-concept in novel, and to describe needs and motives underlie Pollyanna's behavior. This study focuses on the major character, namely Pollyanna. The type of the study is qualitative research. The method of data collection is documentation, while the technique of data analysis is descriptive analysis.*

*The result of this study shows the following conclusion. Firstly, based on the portrayal analysis of Pollyanna, the researcher concludes that Pollyanna as the major character in this novel has flat character. Pollyanna's character has one side of personality, namely positive. From the beginning of the story until the end of the story, Pollyanna's personal identity, physical qualities, moral qualities, mental qualities, and social qualities are positive. Secondly, based on humanistic psychological analysis of Carl Rogers, Eleanor H. Porter's Pollyanna novel shows that the major character, Pollyanna, builds positive self concept. Thirdly, based on humanistic psychological analysis of Abraham Maslow, Pollyanna's behavior generally is based on belongingness and love needs.*

*Key words: optimistic, view of life, Pollyanna, Humanistic Psychology*

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## Introduction

*Pollyanna* is a best seller novel which is written by Eleanor Hodgman Porter and was first published in 1913. The novel is now considered a classic of children's literature. The title character's name becomes a popular term for someone with the optimistic view. The novel tells about Pollyanna, an optimistic young girl who, after the parents' death, goes to live with her bitter aunt. Pollyanna's optimism is influenced by the "glad game" which her father taught her and soon she spreads the game to people around her. The game teaches everyone that no matter how bad the life is, there is always something to be glad about. Pollyanna optimism is put to the test when she gets accident that makes her legs paralyzed.

Eleanor Hodgman Porter is a famous American novelist. She was born on 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1868, in Littleton, N.H. She married with a businessman, John L. Porter, in 1892. *Pollyanna* was a sentimental story of an optimistic little girl who facing difficulties became a popular phenomenon. The novel was immediately popular. One million copies were sold in 1913, the year when it was first published. Two years later Porter wrote a sequel, *Pollyanna Grows Up*, in which the spirited heroine travels to Europe and discovers adult challenges. *Pollyanna* was adapted for Broadway in a production starring Helen Hayes in 1916 and then into a motion picture starring Mary Pickford (America's Sweetheart) in 1920. The 1960 Disney version made a star of Hayley Mills and is still popular today. Porter died on the 21st of May, 1920, in Cambridge, Mass. Several *Pollyanna* sequels were written by other authors after her death.

The benefit of this research is divided into two, namely theoretical benefit and practical benefit. Theoretical benefit is this study is proposed to give a contribution to literature researches dealing with Eleanor H Porter's *Pollyanna*. While the practical benefit of this research is to give deeper understanding about the content of the play, especially from the psychology aspect.

The researcher is interested to answer how the optimistic view of life is reflected in Eleanor Porter's *Pollyanna* (1913). The details objectives are as follows: to describe Pollyanna portrayal in Eleanor H.Porter's *Pollyanna* novel, to explain Pollyanna's self-concept in novel, and to describe needs and motives underlie Pollyanna's behavior

This research analyzes the optimistic view of life which is related to a psychological phenomenon. The theories that will be used by the researcher are A Humanistic Psychological Approach of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. It is because in the novel there are some psychological phenomena which are shown by the author.

Optimistic individuals have been cataloged as having positive expectations for life, and believe that the future will hold favorable outcomes (Scheier and Carver, 1987). Optimism is related to various aspects of psychological and physical well-being in adults (Schweizer, Beck-Seyffer, & Schneider, 1999: 67). Seligman (1998:55), as a psychologist, stated that optimistic people experience less depression and increased enjoyment in social interactions. This is due to their ability to expect positive future outcomes based on positive past experiences.

Humanistic psychology gives emphasis on the important of free will. It means that every human has freedom to make their choice (Coon, 1980: 18). The free will can help people to decide their way to make their choice. It means every single person has ability, mind, and action to do what they want and choose in life (Burger in Gerow, 1989:411). Humanistic also regards that human strive for growth. They have desire to develop their potential reaching the goal in life (Zimbardo and Ruch, 1980; 25-27).

The center concept of Carl Rogers' Humanistic psychology theory is self-concept. The self-concept includes not only our perceptions of what we are like but also what we think we ought to be and would to be (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992:499). There are three important elements of self-concept, namely need for positive regard, condition of worth, and

unconditional positive regard (Rogers in Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992:500). When human has developed the elements of self-concept, they will become fully functioning person. There are five characteristics of fully functioning person, namely openness to experience, existential living, organismic trusting, experiential freedom, and creativity (Rogers in Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992:507).

Maslow states that humanistic psychology believes that human being always has many needs. After one need is fulfilled, they try to fulfill the other needs (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992: 448). Maslow formulates a theory of human motivation that is certain basic needs such as physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization (Hall and Lindzey, 1985: 201-202).

This research analyzes the optimistic view of life which is reflected in *Pollyanna* novel. This novel has been analyzed by the following previous researchers, namely Wati Purnama Sari (2012). The title of her research is "The Character Analysis Of *Pollyanna* Whittier In Eleanor H. Porter's Novel Entitled "*Pollyanna*" By Using Psychological Approach From Carl Jung's Theory". Hamidayanti (2013). The title of the research is "An Analysis of moral value of the main character in *Pollyanna* a novel by Eleanor H. Porter". Cynthia Wishell (2005). The title of her research is "Stylistic and emotional analyses of Eleanor H Porter's Novel *Pollyanna* Using the New Dictionary of Affects". The optimistic view of life has also been analyzed by the following previous researchers, namely Randri Wibowo (2007). The title is "The optimism of Julia Stanford in Sydney Sheldon's Morning, Noon, and Night: An Individual Psychological Approach". Susi Susanti (2013). The title is "Optimism of Larry Crowne Reflected in Tom Hank's Larry Crowne Movie (2011): An Individual Psychological Approach". Joseph Rabiega and Brooke J. Cannon (2013). The title of their research is The Relationship of Optimism with Psychological and Physical Well-Being. William N. Dember and Larry Penwell (2000). The title is "Happiness,

depression, and the Pollyanna Principle". The theory which is used in the present research is Humanistic Psychological Approach. There are previous researchers which have used this theory, namely Arief Mono Nugroho (2008). The title is "The important of self-concept in Charles Dickens novel's *David Copperfield*: A Humanistic Psychological Approach". Nanik Rosita (2004). The title is "Motive and Its Influences on the Major Character's Behavior in Danielle Steel's *Remembrance*: Humanistic Psychological Approach". Munfarida (2009). The title is "Self-Actualization in William Somerset Maugham's of *Human Bondage*: Humanistic Psychological Approach".

Those previous researches are used by researcher to show the differences and similarities of this present research with the previous researches, so that this present research will not be a plagiarism research. The previous studies are also used to help the researcher in analyzing the data. The present research analyzes the optimistic view of life which is being reflected in Eleanor H. Porter's *Pollyanna* (1913). In analyzing the optimistic view of life, the researcher used Humanistic Psychological Approach.

## Research Method

This study belongs to qualitative research. In qualitative research, the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998:15). The object of the research consists of two object, namely formal object and material object. The formal object of this research is optimistic view of life, and the material object of this research is Eleanor H.Porter's *Pollyanna* novel.

The data source of this research is divided into two, namely primary data source and secondary data source. The primary data source of the study the novel itself, Eleanor Porter's *Pollyanna* novel. The secondary data sources are Biography of the author namely Eleanor

Porter, websites in the internet about *Pollyanna*, and other resources which support to analyze. The method of data collection is documentation. The document analysis refers to printed materials, images, literary works, film, or other types of records (Creswell, 2012: 160).

Technique of the data analysis used by the writer is descriptive technique. The detail description means the authors describe what they see. This detail is provided within the context of the setting of the person, place, or event. Description becomes a good place to start in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2012: 184).

## **Research Finding And Discussion**

The researcher analyzes the optimistic view of life of the major character, Pollyanna. Based on this issue, this research has the following research findings and discussions, namely the analysis of the portrayal of Pollyanna, the self concept of Pollyanna, and the needs and motives underlie Pollyanna's behavior. This study tries to discuss them and correlate all of them. Eleanor H. Porter in *Pollyanna* novel generally wants to express the optimistic view of life of the major character, Pollyanna.

### **1. The Portrayal of Pollyanna**

Portrayal is the act of showing or describing someone or something. Portrayal is also called characterization. Kennedy states that characterization is the description of the quality of the character which includes physically, mentally, morally, or socially (Kennedy, 1983:45). Characterization is the way of the author to portray the characters in the story (Hall, 1987: 46).

Characters can be portrayed in a text through showing and telling as two different modes of presentation. Klarer (2004: 17) states that the explanatory characterization, or telling, describes a person through a narrator. While dramatic characterization, or showing,

creates the impression on the reader that he or she is able to perceive the acting figures without any intervening agency, as if witnessing a dramatic performance.

There are some qualities which are used to analyze the portrayal of Pollyanna, namely personal identity, physical qualities, moral qualities, mental qualities, and social qualities. *The personal identity* is explained that Pollyanna Whittier is an eleven years old girl who becomes orphaned after the death of his father, John Whittier, a poor priest in Western town. Her mother, Jenni Harrington died since Pollyanna was baby. After her father's death, Pollyanna is sent to live with a wealthy aunt, Polly Harrington, in New England village, namely Beldingsville, Vermont. Her aunt is very bitter and stern. Pollyanna often gets bad treatments from her aunt.

*Physically*, Pollyanna has light hair and slender body. She also has big blue eyes and freckles on her face. Pollyanna often wears red gingham dress, straw hat, and always braids her hair. Pollyanna is actually beautiful, but looks unattractive. She is a lively little girl. It makes her likes having playtime to do what she wants.

*Morally*, Eleanor H. Porter creates Pollyanna as an optimistic young girl and of course as a young girl she is still innocent. Pollyanna is also talkative. She spreads her optimistic spirit through her glad game. The glad game drives Pollyanna to be always hopeful. Pollyanna is truthful girl. Pollyanna is truthful and trustworthy. Pollyanna meets Jimmy, a homeless boy, and promises to find him a home.

*Mentally*, Pollyanna is tricky. She shows her trickiness when she finds a way to enjoy every bad things from her aunt. Pollyanna is also intelligent. She is well advance student in her school.

*Socially*, Pollyanna is an easy-going child. In Bedingsville, Pollyanna has many friends but all of them are adult. Pollyanna is friendly. She likes having new friends and makes them happy.

Pollyanna is cheerful girl. She has ability to cheer up people around her aunt's house. Pollyanna is a caring girl. She always cares about people around her. She cares people who are sick around the house. Pollyanna is a loving young girl. She is easy to find goodness on people. Pollyanna is also a helpful girl. She helps and cheers up people by telling the glad game.

According to William Kenney (1966: 28-29), there are also a specific type of character feature; a flat character and a round character. Flat character is basically a character that has one side of personality without ever be is changed in whole story. On the contrary, the round character is a character with more complex features of ability, psychology, points of view based on the situations given in the story.

From the explanation above, the writer concludes that Pollyanna as the major character in this novel has flat character. Pollyanna's character has one side of personality, namely positive. Her personal identity, physical qualities, moral qualities, mental qualities, and social qualities are positive.

## **2. The Self Concept of Pollyanna**

Through *Pollyanna* novel, Eleanor H. Porter draws how people develop their self concept to be a fully functioning person. The development of self concept such as need for positive regard, condition of worth and unconditional positive regard makes person becomes a fully functioning person. And the fully function people has a characteristic such as openness to experience, existential living, organismic trusting, experiential freedom and creativity. All this elements and characteristic are described clearly through the major character, Pollyanna.

The need for positive regard happens to Pollyanna when she gives compliment to her bitter aunt, Miss Polly. Pollyanna is still



grateful to her aunt for giving the uncomfortable room. Pollyanna thinks positive for every punishment she gets from her aunt

The condition of worth also occurs in Pollyanna's personality. Pollyanna asks Nancy to play the game. She cheers up Mrs. Snow with a few surprises. She becomes friendly with Mr. Pendleton. She helps Jimmy to find a home.

When the unconditional positive regard occurs Pollyanna becomes a better person in every moment in her life. Pollyanna is accepted to live in Aunt Polly's house. She is also easily accepted by Nancy, Old Tom, Timothy, and Dr. Chilton

To be a fully function person, one needs not only develops the elements of self concept, but also has a characteristic of fully function person. The openness to experience is shown when Pollyanna learns to enjoy the uncomfortable room. She realizes that she cannot leave her only aunt. When Pollyanna gets accident, it makes her realize that she can't be glad if she cannot walk.

The existential living is living fully in each moment. Pollyanna's optimistic makes her a person who always accepts the live good or bad condition. She always takes the positive side for every bad moment. It makes her really enjoys where she is, but she also tries getting life better in the future.

The organismic trusting is the other characteristic of fully functioning person. Pollyanna's life gives her a concept in the way to make a good choice and what Pollyanna feels right to her. She trusts herself to help Jimmy to find a home. She trust herself that Aunt Polly needs Pollyanna at home, so she refuses Mr. Pendleton invitation to live with him.

But in the end, Pollyanna realizes that she has a responsibility to the people around her, not just let them. This condition is experiential freedom. Although she does not have self confidence in helping Jimmy, she does all the action to find a home for Jimmy, and

finally she can find a home for Jimmy and also can help Mr.Pendleton for his loneliness life.

Pollyanna is a creative person who has many ideas or actions to solve her all problems. This condition makes Pollyanna become a fully function person. She has many ideas, projects or actions in several conditions such as bringing jelly for Mrs.Snow and Mr.Pendleton, finding a home for Jimmy, and cheering up Miss Polly.

*Pollyanna* novel is the example of literary work which shows a psychological phenomenon. The psychology of literature has four meanings, namely, the study of writer as type or individual, the study of the creative process, the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, and the effects of literature upon its readers (audience psychology) (Wellek and Warren: 1963: 75). This research is included in the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature. It is because this research analyzes the character which is created by the author. Porter doesn't create the character based on her imagination but the real life which is included in psychological phenomenon. In *Pollyanna* novel, Porter shows that the major character, Pollyanna, builds herself concept by building positive self concept.

### **3. Needs and Motives of Pollyanna**

The analysis of the major character shows that she has passed the three basic needs such as psychological needs, safety needs, and love and belongingness needs. Pollyanna as the major character has been able to fulfill all of these needs. The author in this novel shows that the major character is like another people that must fulfill the psychology humanistic. To fulfill the psychology humanistic a person can move to fulfill another need if they can fulfill the first step of psychology humanistic. In this movie can reflect that the major character is fulfilling the first step needs of psychology of humanistic.

First time the major character fulfills her need of physiological needs. The major character of this novel Pollyanna is easy to satisfy this need, including clothes, food and drink, home activity, oxygen, and sleep.

After Pollyanna fulfills the needs in psychology need, she can move to fulfill the next steps of psychology of humanistic, namely Safety Needs. The safety needs of this novel consist of familial, protection, and health.

The next is belongingness and love needs. The parameters for the person who can fulfill these needs are namely family, friendship, and love.

Pollyanna is an orphan young girl who can easily get familial needs. After her father's death she still has aunt to live with. Pollyanna's friendship needs are reflected in relationship between Pollyanna and people around her. The last is love's relationship. Pollyanna Whittier is 11th years old. Pollyanna is still young and doesn't have a boyfriend. So that the researcher cannot find this belongingness and loves need.

The next needs are self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs. Needs for self-esteem include respect by the others, recognition, fame, glory, appreciation, and dignity. Knowing one has reached this level or not can be recognized by the presence of the characteristics of self-actualization person by Maslow as conveyed in the major character's personality. Self-actualization needs will occur in adult people. Pollyanna is still very young to have self-esteem and self-actualization needs. So the researcher doesn't find this self-actualization need in this novel.

Maslow states that hierarchy of needs shows that the lower needs are satisfied before the person motivated by higher needs (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992: 448). It means that both physiological and safety needs must be satisfied to some degree before the needs

belongingness and love emerge and press for satisfaction. When the needs for belongingness and love have been reasonably gratified, people will be motivated for self-esteem needs. Finally, if all the needs are satisfied, the need for self-actualization comes to the fore. This novel shows that Pollyanna has passed the physiological needs, safety needs, and love and belongingness needs.

### **Conclusion And Pedagogical Implications**

Based on the analysis and discussion, this study wants to the conclusion such as:

1. Based on the portrayal analysis of Pollyanna, the researcher concludes that Pollyanna as the major character in this novel has flat character. Pollyanna's character has one side of personality, namely positive. Her personal identity, physical qualities, moral qualities, mental qualities, and social qualities are positive. From the beginning until the end of the story, Pollyanna's characterizations are positive. It supports theme of the novel and make it easily to be understood by the reader to have positive mindset about everything.
2. Eleanor H.Porter's *Pollyanna* novel shows that the major character, Pollyanna, builds a positive self concept. The researcher uses humanistic psychological of Carl Rogers to analyze the self concept of Pollyanna. Pollyanna is an optimistic orphan girl who develops positive self concept to be fully functioning person.
3. Pollyanna's behavior generally is based on belongingness and love needs. Abraham Maslows's Humanistic Psychological Approach is used to analyze needs and motives underlie Pollyanna's behavior. The analysis of the major character, Pollyanna, shows that she has passed the five basic needs such as psychological needs, safety needs, and belongingness and love needs.

There are three pedagogical implications being discussed in this study. Those are:

1. There should be a social institution to help the orphan children. This institution is expected to provide the needs of the orphan children. The social institution can provide protection and love, home, food, dress, and good education.
2. The family or caretaker can give protection and love to the children. The protection is not only confined to the caretaker's ability to keep the children in home, but also involves the caretaker's ability to show love and affection to children.
3. The teenager can have optimistic view of life which makes them see the positive aspect in every problem, so they can be happy and go on their life.

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